

A Semi-Monthly
SUMMARY
of World-Wide
Motion Picture
NEWS

THE CANADIAN MOTION PICTURE EXHIBITOR

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Exhibs Join Press-Film Fight

To the 'Indies'

That's the title of a recent book and, believe it or leave it, it's not about us. The story is of a man with an idea, the most valuable thing in any business, and what it did for the world.

The poor guy who is the hero suffered jeers for years. His idea was pooh-poohed. When he finally put it across it became a highlight of history. Still and all, he wound up broke and in jail. Another fellow in the same game even stole the credit for doing it first.

The idea man was Christopher Columbus. He thought he could find a short cut to the rich Indies. In the end he found backing. Two smart business men bankrolled him. Chris made a deal by which he cut in for ten per cent of the net. Not bad.

Even then Chris was off the track. He ran into the New World while looking for a piece of the old one. He really thought it was the Indies and called the natives Indians—a mistake that became a rule. A man named Amerigo arrived later but stole all the publicity and got the place named after him.

However, most ideas turn up unscheduled. Scientists find solutions in unexpected ways. They make discoveries while looking for something else. We get the same chances in our business.

Right now business has everyone worried. The experts are busy explaining why it isn't what it should be. One says it's the uncertainty of the future. Others nominate strikes, the draft and thrift campaigns for the Oscar of grief.

Most of the experting comes from the States and doesn't apply here. In motion pictures this is a different world. For instance, we

Deanna Durbin & Co. Start A New One

Deanna Durbin, who ought to be billed as the "Winnipeg-o'-my-heart," is at work in Universal's "Almost an Angel."

Robert Cummings is the romantic lead. Charles Laughton is in it too. Henry Koster is directing.

MPTOA to Talk Tiff Over In Coming H'wood Confab

The current controversy between the studios and press about early previewing of pictures has drawn exhibitor organizations all over the continent into the argument. The scribes are objecting

vehemently to the new policy of advance showings being moved much closer to the release date.

But He Had The Right Idea

The tax has caused some unusual public reactions. An exhibitor reports this.

A soldier put down a quarter for admission and, upon being asked for the impost, protested. He thought that men in khaki should have been excepted. He wanted to take the matter up with the manager.

"He can't help you," explained the cashier. "Mr. Ilsley is responsible."

The soldier paid his quarter, gave his ticket to the man on the door and asked, "Pardon me, but where can I find Mr. Ilsley?"

have amusement taxes and a movieless Sunday, which cuts a day off the gross. There are many purely Canadian problems, as well as local ones.

Canadian problems need Canadian solutions. Here and there an enterprising exhibitor pitches in, licks the trouble and does business (Continued on Page 2.)

The matter will be discussed from the exhibitor's standpoint in Hollywood next month, when the Motion Picture Theatre Owners of America convene. The first sign of the exhibitors' sympathy with the studios came out in a meeting at New Haven recently. Columnists and others who give away the twists and turns of the story were handed a good verbal going-over.

Many pictures, it is claimed, which are on the big budget list, fail to meet anticipated business while others, small and unheralded, exceed expectations. This is regarded as proof that public curiosity, so hard to excite, has been partly satisfied by the vast wave of details released long before the picture. It is estimated that there are 275,000,000 copies of magazines distributed in America annually—more than two copies to a person.

The battle has become anybody's fight. Trade papers, much closer to the industry and guide of the (Continued on Page 2.)

Picture Pioneers to Make Short Showing Theatres' War Effort

Canada's picture audiences will learn of the splendid contribution of film folk to the Dominion's war effort. A ten-minute reel showing the various sides of theatre activity will be exhibited in representative houses from coast to coast.

The Canadian Picture Pioneers, in which membership is restricted to persons in the business for a quarter-century or more, is back of the idea. It originated with them.

Not only have picture people turned over all facilities to further War Stamps, Victory Loan and other drives, but they have undertaken special events of their own.

Gene Autry's rodeo last fall was an example of private theatrical enterprise for the public cause.

Ways of helping the war effort have been the Pioneer's big worry since hostilities began. The film should help stir general interest in coming campaigns by its example of the picture people's whole-hearted assistance. It should win the industry great goodwill.

Claire Hague heads the committee, with Tom Daley and Archie Laurie sharing the responsibility. Associated Screen News, which prepared the script according to Pioneers' ideas, is doing the job.

PRICES UP — GROSSES DOWN

The 20 per cent federal tax on admissions, inaugurated on May 19, has hit business hard. In many cases grosses have shrunk by one-third.

Except in isolated instances the tax has been passed on to the patrons. Here and there an exhibitor has spared the youngsters the added pennies by absorbing the tax at Saturday matinees.

The official belief that the extra money in circulation these days would increase business is still to prove itself.

Alta. Beats Anti-Prize Edict

Edmonton — The recent bill which, if passed, would have stopped the donation of gifts and prizes in Alberta houses has been withdrawn. The bill had been given its first reading.

Three associations combined to provide a committee that waited on the government. Walter Wilson and J. J. Leiber for the Edmonton Exhibitors' Ass'n; Roy Chown and J. Peacock for the Calgary Exhibitors' Ass'n, and H. G. Stevenson, Edson and Nat Park, Wetaskiwin, for the Independent Exhibitors' Ass'n.

Pleased with the success of the joint effort, the committee has been appointed permanently to deal with governmental matters. Another measure they persuaded the government to hold off was a tax on children's 15-cent tickets.

They are meeting with Hon. E. C. Manning, provincial secretary and minister of trade and industry. The chief point of discussion is the question of one man in the projection room instead of the two required under existing law.

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Warner's List Long on Shorts

The largest yearly agenda of short stuff in Warner's history is on file — 86 in all, reports Variety.

Planned are a dozen two-reel black-and-whites; six two-reel Technicolors; 10 one-reel Master Melody band pictures; 10 one-reel Vitaphone Varieties; 10 one-reel Color Parades; 16 Looney Tunes; 26 Merrie Melodies and two cartoons carried over from the Leon Schlesinger schedule.

We added them up and our count came to 92. So what? There's plenty to pick from in either total.

In the long run the Variety count may come out right. The cartoonists are playing hookey from ink-and-board here and threatening to there. Schlesinger had his troubles, now settled, and Disney is on the spot.

To the 'Indies'

(Continued from page 1.)

while the rest are standing still in the gloom.

Like Columbus, it's sometimes better to be off the track than to stand still. Better to be going somewhere — anywhere. You're bound to think of many things and try some that work out. Tell us about them. Pass on your ideas. Write to us. Let the other exhibitors know what you think and how you did this or that.

Every day the exhibitor needs new answers to new problems. Let's pool our brainpower. Send us your pet peeve or your latest brainwave.

We'll put it in the wash. Something might show up that will be of tremendous value to the exhibitor.

Tell 'Em and Sell 'Em

What brings the customers in?

If we knew the answer we could trade it for a share of the industry without putting up a dime. No sooner do the sages think they have the answer when the whims of the cash customers prove them wrong.

Hollywood spends mountains of money for films they hope will bust the box-office wide open—and gets them rarely. It kicks in another heap of legal tender for exploitation. Then the exhibitor has to make the chinaware manufacturers rich to coax the customers past the door—and often in unsatisfactory numbers.

Suddenly out of some forgotten corner of a studio sneaks a "sleeper"—a picture nobody knows anything about—and grabs press and public by the ears. Or a cheaply made film that grows into a surefire series. And you can't keep the people out with a tank division.

A couple like that and the exhibitor quits beating his wife and cursing the children. Then it's summer and business droops. Or a new tax comes along.

That's the kind of business it is. Full of surprises. What keeps it going? We'll tell you what we think.

The family trade. You can't work too hard on it. The people brought in by good general exploitation are the cream—but the steady dribble of plain folks who love the movies pays the bills and leaves a profit.

They're good customers summer and winter for the independent exhibitor. Sure, their trade falls off in the summer. But there's a good chance to keep them coming. Here's a sample of movie chatter at home.

"It's too hot to sit around the house," says one. "What'll we do?"

"How about a movie?" says the other. "Might be a good idea—but I don't feel like getting dressed."

"All right then," says the first, a bold soul. "So let's go to a show around the corner."

That's us. We're around the corner on every street in the country. Plain folks dealing with plain folks.

Let's show them we're plain folks. Tell them they're welcome in anything but a suit of skin. Who cares if Pop shows his suspenders and Mom wears that old thing she changed to after dinner? They won't—if the neighbors are doing the same.

Tell them via the screen. Maybe a happy guy wearing a barrel and telling his friend that he's on the way to your theatre—where he can be as comfortable as he likes. Don't worry. They won't think it's a rule and really come that way.

Keep the steady trade headed your way, come all weather. It's the backbone of the business.

Charge Fee For One Night Stands Exchanges Stop Home Shows

Hollywood—The movie capital, which makes a fuss about small things while ignoring big ones, just woke up to an evil that has irked exhibitors for years — the careless admission of potential customers to screenings. These, if they didn't see the picture free and ahead of the public, would pay in the regular way.

Film and theatre people, in being good to their friends, are hard on the exhibitor. It only takes a few admissions to make a dollar. There are 52 runs a year in the larger houses and often 104 in smaller ones. Customers killed off by pre-release showings can add up to a tidy sum if they paid.

In Hollywood, where home projection rooms are common, so many private showings were on each night that they actually represented a competitive circuit.

Since most belonged to movie people they were served free of rental in almost every case. The whole thing started when busy executives began looking at rushes or the finished product at home. It grew and got out of hand.

Exhibitors and exchanges finally revolted at the unfair competition. Now the Producers' Association has ruled that home projectionists will have to pay from \$15 to \$25 for the privilege.

MPTOA Will Talk Over Feud

(Continued from page 1.)

buyers, want to be exceptions to any rule that may hold back press and radio. Most agree that great harm has been done the box-office by thoughtless and undisciplined information.

Hollywood's press representative problem has never been easy. The Hays Office long ago took over the sorting of correspondents and all credentials are passed out by them. Applicants must meet certain qualifications, mainly those pertaining to the circulation and standing of the papers they represent.

There are over 300 correspondents in the movie city and, up to the beginning of the war, it was next to Washington as an American source of news. In many cases double previews had to be held, one in a theatre and the other on the lot. Naturally, everyone wanted to attend the public showing and the situation was a trying one for all.

The giving away of the story from start to finish, which is a real point of issue, is contrary to almost all writing practice. The surprise motive is the rule in most public entertainment and in all drama. It has been since scribbling began. It doesn't matter how much money is spent on a picture or whether it's big budget or "B." If the patrons don't care what happens or how it turns out, they walk out—and tell their friends.

Writers and exhibitors, who are the A and Z respectively of the business, know and fear this fact. How to retain audience interest and attention to the finish is the No. 1 worry. Stars recognize it when they fight for the best stories and story departments strive to find novel scripts.

This inflexible truth, however, seems to have been lost on press and publicity departments. They seem to measure their work by lines captured and not the effect of them. The public has been entering theatres aware of what's going to happen on the screen. Knowing the happenings in the lives of the characters, the patrons watch with diminished interest. No doubt the emphasis on screen material in the photo magazines is immeasurably valuable in interesting the public. The problem is one of treatment.

Exhibitors are tired of audiences giving them the lowdown on coming pictures and asking questions that are hard to answer, it seems. They don't want the customers to know more than the trailers tell. They are rolling up their sleeves. It will be quite a squabble.

In the meantime the studio-press differences may be settled to the satisfaction of both parties. But the exhibitor wants a say in the terms.

Serial History Repeats Itself

Serials, in the early days, had a powerful pull for old and young. They ran on all shows all week. Now the wheel has turned full circle. They're back again. Once it was Ben Wilson, Pearl White, Ruth Roland, Grace Cunard and so on. Now it's Buck Jones, Eduardo Cikanelli, Tom Tyler, Ralph Byrd and Frances Gifford.

Three companies are busy on the episodic epics—Universal, Columbia and Republic. They each produce four a year, with enough chapters to keep the urchins puzzled and amazed. The studios woke up to serial possibilities when an experiment with the Lone Ranger proved that a ready-made market, created by the comic strips and radio, was waiting.

Paramount has Superman and is preparing a series of 12 cartoons in Technicolor by Max Fleischer. Superman is international. He's on radio in several countries, a cartoon in 117 periodicals, has a fan club of 100,000 and sells everything under the sun.

The invincible character is the creation of Jerry Seigel and Joe Shuster. The latter is from Canada. He left Toronto, where he was born, at an early age.

Current thrillers are Captain Marvel, Dick Tracy, The Green Hornet, Sky Raiders, The Mysterious Dr. Satan, Jungle Girl and the Lone Ranger.

They'll clog the place with kids on Saturday afternoons.

No Rest For the Wicket

Abbot and Costello, Universal's slapstickers, caused such a tumult at the box-office with their "Buck Privates" that the studio is letting them rampage through all the services.

Toronto, being a military town, went all out for "Buck Privates," with an eight-week run at Shea's, longest stay of anything in the history of the house. This fondness of the staid Queen City for army antics first showed itself when George Formby, the English buffoon, bowed in.

Universal has announced the release date of the new Abbot and Costello screamer, "In the Navy," as May 30. The boys may live double lives on the Toronto film front, since "Buck Privates" will linger at Shea's or go on to the second-run houses. Even early shorts of the team are pulling the customers in.

The situation must be somewhat embarrassing for a certain MGM producer. He tested the team two years ago and thumbed Abbot and Costello out.

On the Square

By HYE BOSSIN

New York has its Broadway, Hollywood its Vine and Toronto its Dundas Square. This is where big-shots, bookers, busybodies and buyers meet on even terms. The keen awareness that is such a part of business inside the buildings is relaxed on the curb. Gossip and friendly joshing is the rule of the day.

Exhibitors, though night workers and day worriers, are also matinee idlers. They like to loaf in the sunshine, borrow a shoulder to cry on or joke with the other members of the pavement parliament. Busy folks hurry by enviously with only a shout and a wave of the hand. Luckier ones stop for a quick kibitz.

Out there in the sunshine, with the world on wheels whirling by, you can hear more about the state of the business across the country than in all the trade journals put together. That's where the out-of-towners stop between bookings to greet old friends and pledge loyalty to the common cause of the exhibitor.

Many an executive, looking lonesomely at the scene from his window, surrenders to the urge and joins the jibe session. On the Square there are no secretaries, counters or telephones to cut a man short. Everybody is equal and speaks right up. Here is a forum of democracy and free speech. And here's where you learn things.

These are the men who hand the product to the people who pay off—the public. They know the consumer's whims and wherefores. What they say about the business makes sharp sense.

Every town has its own equivalent of The Square. We'd like to hear what your curb congressmen have to say.

Sid Taube, the Automatic Vendor man and famed as a good fellow, is working overtime in the cause of craft comradeship. His idea is a Motion Picture Division of the Primrose Club, the boys to have a cave of their own on the premises to kibitz in.

Al Daniels of the Royal, Toronto, used to be a master of ceremonies in vaudeville. Maybe he's hiding out in the picture business until it comes back.

Something Al said the other day set us thinking about the phenomenon of the business, the horse opera. He overheard one patron complain to his friend: "Aw, two pictures—and not a horse!"

Westerns have their own name players who can outdraw a boxcar of the top stars in many small towns. Exhibitors throw Garbo in as an added feature—and with a prayer.

No wonder they say that Gene Autry sells twice as many records as Bing Crosby.

The Hess Why-did-he-do-it? is still unrevealed. Gerry Shumer of Empire-Universal has her own solution. After what Hitler did to the German film industry, says Shumer, Hess probably headed for England to see a good movie!

The Ritz Brothers would be surprised at the extra laugh they got in an English theatre recently while "Argentine Nights" was showing. A girl's orchestra was on the screen. Suddenly the picture was stopped and an air raid warning was flashed.

The second the film was resumed one of the Ritz boys came on and said, "Say, girls, it's about time you scrambled!"

The English audience, who had been sitting there nonchalantly while the Nazis did their dirty work, roared.

Cecil Roberts, the author, has written a book called "One Small Candle." He found the title when, outside London, he saw an old lady burying her dog. The epitaph read:

"There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of one small candle."

It touches the heart and sticks in the mind these dire days.

A scene in the new picture, "A Yank in the RAF" called for nine planes to fly to Canada from the U.S. After the scene was finished the planes did fly to Canada to join the air arm!

All-year-round attraction at the Casino, Toronto movie and burlesque spot, is the house cat. It ambles onstage at will and steals the show.

One comedian recently defeated the feline Barrymore as a counter-attraction.

"Scram, pussy," he cracked. "This is a monologue—not a catalogue!"

All Quiet (?) On Film Front

The N. L. Nathanson-Famous Players split, which was newsworthy enough to command attention in the general press, seems to have died down. Since the first announcement and the subsequent explanations no further developments on either side have been made public. However, there is no doubt that there is great activity under the surface. A recent report said that the Nathanson interests had acquired thirteen new theatres throughout Canada and it can be presumed that they will keep adding to the string.

Nathanson's resignation, after twenty years with Famous Players, caused a realignment of executives and a test of loyalties. J. J. Fitzgibbons, who was vice-president, replaced his former chief.

Nathanson's explanation that the fight was over Canadian vs. American control of Canada's market won him sympathy. Saturday Night, Canadian organ of opinion, had an article by Donald Fields on the subject. He wrote: "No matter how benevolent or beneficent American financial control of our movie business may be, it is anonymous and nationally irresponsible in Canada." However, that view is not shared by everyone connected with or interested in the Canadian motion picture industry.

Motion picture men agreed that there were other features in the case beside the main one of national control.

Saturday Night indicated that Nat Taylor, head of 20th Century theatres, a powerful group, would become vice-president of Nathanson's new set-up. They have opened offices in the Royal Bank building but Mr. Taylor hasn't been seen near them. At the time of going to press he couldn't be reached for a statement of his position.

Film for English Aid Finally Under Way

After 18 months the much-publicized cooperative film effort of Hollywood's English colony is under way.

Called "The Changing World," it is the story of the shifting scene told through the lives of members of one family from 1804 to 1941. The scene, the family seat, is retained throughout.

It's a patriotic scramble. Engaged in the work throughout its production will be thirty writers, five directors, over twenty-five stars and one composer, Noel Coward—figures subject to change without notice.

Gene Lockhart is the only Canadian mentioned in that connection.



DIGEST of REVIEWS



REGAL

A WOMAN'S FACE:

If you like your entertainment different, here it is. If you liked Joan Crawford before, you will rave about her now. If you didn't like her before, this will make you wonder why not. It is really a picture that should be on everyone's must list and while it may need clever exploitation, we feel that it is destined to go places and might be one of the best ten of the year. Starred with Crawford is Melvyn Douglas.

ABUL THE BUL-BUL AMEER:

We take off our hats to one of the grandest cartoons we have viewed in some time and which, to our way of thinking, is worth advertising, in many cases, over the feature.

HER FIRST BEAU:

COLUMBIA

Fairly entertaining picture with the marquee value of Jane Withers and Jackie Cooper. It is a family story based on puppy love that plenty of the oldsters will get a kick out of and is good clean fun for any audience. However, this picture will have to be strongly campaigned to reap any sort of harvest at the box-office.

SHE KNEW ALL THE ANSWERS:

This latest comedy from the company that knows how stars Joan Bennett and Franchot Tone and is the old story of the chorus girl getting mixed up in Wall Street and instead of marrying the man she started out for, ends up winning the broker. This one is as clean a package as has ever come out of Hollywood, there not being an off-color situation or line in the entire entertainment. Which once again proves that a good comedy doesn't have to rely on sex or off-color wise-cracks to get by. We feel that here is a picture that will do fairly well by the cash register.

R. K. O.

THE RELUCTANT DRAGON:

Latest Disney feature-length cartoon in which Bob Benchley roams the Disney Studios. Picture not only contains plenty of good laughable cartoon sequences but is very entertaining and educational in portraying the inner working of the Disney Studios. The feature is very well done. The best sequence to our way of thinking is "The Outside of a Horse is Good for the Inside of a Man" with Goofy, and the weakest part is the actual showing of "The Reluctant Dragon" at the finish. Properly sold and exploited, this picture should fare satisfactorily at the Box-Office.

SUNNY:

The third in the series of musicals made by Wilcox, starring Anna Neagle surrounded by a good cast is, to our way of thinking, on a par with the first of the series, "Irene," or probably better. As the second in the series was not up to scratch, it may cause question at the box-office in regard to this newest film but with proper handling, this fare with swell music such as "Who," "Do You Love Me?" etc., can be put over.

UNITED ARTISTS

NEW WINE:

Directorially dull and limpy throughout but always pleasant. A chronicle of the composer Schubert's life. Ilona Massey is the girl who gives up love to push her musical pal. Allen Curtis plays Schubert like it isn't in his line. It isn't. Billy Gilbert goes through the same popular huffing and puffing—but without dialect, a pleasant surprise. Albert Basserman, as Beethoven, is splendid. Binnie Barnes is practically a female version of Hugh Herbert as a screwball duchess. The music is good, of course. Will have to be double-billed.

UNIVERSAL

FLAME OF NEW ORLEANS:

A romantic comedy presenting Marlene Dietrich in a different type of role to her last two or three pictures and which, while we do not feel it will be any terrific box-office sensation, should, nevertheless, be well received. Bruce Cabot does a swell job as the lead.

BLACK CAT:

A spooky comedy starring Basil Rathbone and Hugh Herbert that is far from top entertainment, suffering possibly from story material and direction but will satisfy those who seek this type of picture if built with strong support.

BLOOD AND SAND:

FOX

Big and broad production. Plenty of plush, flash and dash. Classic color and some scenes are magnificently staged. Runs for 123 minutes and holds together all the way. True Love vs The Other Woman—with bulls butting in all the time. Tyrone Power is quite convincing and Rita Hayworth, as a smoldering wench, was never better and should prove a top star after this piece of work. Linda Darnell and John Carradine give great support. Slightly slow for the subject. The sand is there but the blood is only indicated. Will have a powerful pull at the ticket wicket.

GREAT AMERICAN BROADCAST:

A routine musical with Alice Fay, John Payne and Jack Oakie at his very best that is good entertainment of the light variety. Should fare satisfactorily at the box-office.

MILLION \$ BABY:

VITAGRAPH

Here is a sweet comedy that will please audiences everywhere and should build by word of mouth advertising. Priscilla Lane, Jeffery Lynn and May Robson lead a good cast and the picture moves at a terrific clip, packed with hokum as the public loves it, with plenty of romance and comedy. Picture goes a little haywire towards the finish, otherwise same would have been classed a solid hit.

THREE SONS O'GUNS:

Fairly good comedy programmer that is reminiscent of "Three Cheers for the Irish." The competent cast is headed by Tom Brown, Wayne Morris and Joan Leslie.

TIPS ON EXPLOITATION

The Welsh are coming into their own on stage and screen. "Proud Valley," said to be a knockout, has a Welsh background. There are many people from Wales in Canada and good numbers of them are settled in certain districts. The picture should lend itself to special exploitation in those areas. There are a number of societies made up of Welsh folk. Where there is a colony there's usually a choir. They would probably be glad to supplement the program in some way. Other Welsh works current are "How Green is My Valley," a book that will be filmed soon, and Ethel Barrymore's play, "The Corn is Green." The latter may also find its way to the screen.

Pittsburgh press agents of "Major Barbara," G. B. Shaw's

play, passed around a patch of hair, beard, eyebrows and moustache that, when put on, gave a startling Shavian effect. You might play with this one. The kids would be glad to parade the stuff.

The holdback on the inside of the Hess affair has given exhibitors of fictional war features a chance to tie in the mystery. It prodded public interest in the pictures considerably. Catchlines attracted the attention. Playing "After Mein Kampf," the comeon copy read: "Did Rudolf Hess actually write Mein Kampf?" "Why did the No. 2 Nazi desert his chief?" "See the picture Hitler Fears . . ." For "Voice of the Night" the ad read: "The reasons Hess left Germany are seen in 'Voice of the Night.'"

Gingers Rogers Snags One More Award

Ginger Rogers, winner of the Academy Award for her performance in RKO-Radio's "Kitty Foyle," has been voted the most popular star by the part of the British Navy which is based in the far north.

In a letter asking Ginger to consider herself patroness of the "Home Fleet Cinema," Lieutenant Commander Michael Everard, R.N., writes:

"Thought perhaps you might like to know how very popular you are with officers and men from the Admiral of the Fleet down. The more films you can make and send over here the better we shall be pleased."

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Din On For Disney 'Dragon'

A vigorous drum-beating and hollering of wares is on for the new Walt Disney feature, "The Reluctant Dragon," Ned E. Depinet announces from New York. RKO is spending top money for the buildup in an attempt to repeat the box-office success of Disney's first full-length feature, "Snow White."

The first big noise in the general campaign was a full page of colored stills in "This Week Magazine." That periodical is a slip-in section that reaches 5,844,092 readers through 24 big-city Sunday papers. According to content, the magazine is aimed at adults, but the whole family usually ruffles through the week-end papers.

The title, "The Reluctant Dragon," seems somewhat suggestive of the conduct of Ferdinand's bull. It isn't a bit provocative. But the picture is completely different from any previous Disney big-scale effort. It is a series of subjects tied together by an ink-and-paint Bob Benchley, who whirls through a series of escapades in the Disney plant.

Yes, that's the locale. Though ordinary films turn infrequently to Hollywood subjects, the short cartoons have consistently paraded film characters. Now Disney has gone all the way.

The title is based on a sequence in the film, drawn from a kidding of the St. George legend by Kenneth Grahame. The whole idea had plenty of possibilities. The RKO exploiters are making much of the fact that the picture blends the use of living characters with cartoon creations. Also its novel introduction.

What these things mean to the public is a question that the box-office will answer. The new type of subject may take the film over the heads of the lollipop trade. And the juvenile custom is indispensable to Disney full-length features.

RKO will bet that this is a bonanza. And it's spending plenty of money on advertising to support that opinion.

Student's Poll Pulls for Doubles

A poll of American high school students on the double feature showed a majority for it. The Campfire Girls of America, who sponsored the sizeup, asked 16,000 for their opinions. There is a powerful minority against the dual bill, which leaves the exhibitor in the middle.

It was also revealed that most attend movies once a week and pick their pictures by the players, titles and reviews.

Picture Pickups

By TAP KEYES

A living double-feature is Robert Emmet, writer, and Robert Tansey, producer. He's both and the same man—a Siamese twins. Emmet, to give his right name the preference, is a presto producer of Westerns, having completed more than fifty last year. Right now he is getting up a few fast orders for Monogram release. He and his boys go anywhere that hasn't got a billboard in the way and start grinding. Oh, yes—the reason for the double identity. The backers thought Robert Emmet was getting too much money. So he took the cut and added Robert Tansey to the payroll, drawing two cheques. Cute kid, eh?

That fountain of music, Irving Berlin, will do 15 songs for Paramount's "Holiday Inn." Crosby and Astaire will sing and dance them. Crosby may wind up with corns on his vocal cords and Astaire with growls from his arches. . . . Hollywood is turning the camera on itself. A coming film biog will be "In Rudolph Valentino's Day." That ought to drag the people who haven't seen a film since the silents out of their armchairs. . . . Buster Crabbe, the aquatician, will be Billy the Kid in a series of Westerns. Maybe Gene Autry will take up swimming in retaliation. Meanwhile MGM has Robert Taylor in a big budget version of the same subject.

Ted Friend, night club editor of the New York Mirror, just turned up a grand idea. He's negotiating with several film companies to make 16 mm. reels of British child evacuees, to be shipped to their parents for showing. . . . Disney's new long feature has a baby in it. His current feature is "Fantasia." Why not call the new one "Infantasia"? . . . Technicolor production is increased 100 per cent over 1940. Maybe some enterprising exhibitor will hand out special specs for color-blind fans. After all, certain shows offer earphones to deaf folks.

Canada's Gene Lockhart, who wrote the lyrics for "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise" has a new tune titled "A Letter from London." He's busy at Aid-to-Britain activity, enlisting the film colony in support of his varied ventures, the most recent one having been a musical colcny. Gene is set in "International Lady," a sort of G-Man vs. Scotland Yard idea. . . . They're making a musical with an all-colored cast, "Jump for Joy," and Duke Ellington will star. Joe Pasternak is one of the backers and they expect a Broadway showing in the fall.

Penny Singleton, of Blondie fame, will leave Columbia temporarily to do "Cowboy Joe." Screen fans haven't seen all her talents. She's a gifted girl. The question is whether she will seem like the same person to "Blondie" following after a different role. . . . Since the war 450 theatres have closed down in England. . . . Man and wife combinations in the films are rare. Laughton and Lanchester are one example. They're more often hits apart than together. Now Gene Raymond and frau Jeannette MacDonald will do a remake of "Smilin' Through" . . . They've done away with the question of how to pronounce "Dildo Cay" by renaming it "Bahama Passage."

Exhibitors who worry about the future of amusements might be interested in learning that, in the year which ended on March 1, 1940, Ontario poured down 27,350,306 gallons of beer. The brew was worth \$29,439,979. The folks must have their fun. . . . Pierre van Paasen, Canadian correspondent and lecturer, was the principal speaker at the recent open meeting of New York's Cinema Lodge of B'nai B'rith. . . . The opening of any new G. B. Shaw stage drama has always been a big event, especially for ritzy culturites. The movie translations of Shaw's stuff, such as "Major Barbara," now provide the proud premieres. Canadians, deep in war work and worries, may not respond to fuss-and-feather unveilings. However, the picture is warm and human and, gala get-together or modest debut, it will still do good business. Incidentally, the 85-year-old Shaw speaks a prologue piece that sounds like his adieu.

Hollywood memory: A theatre with a horror double-feature, "Dracula and Frankenstein." The sign outside read: "Special Children's Matinee Today." . . . Detroit theatres are collecting books and magazines for the boys in camp. . . . Gracie Fields is on her second Canadian-American tour. The first one netted almost \$400,000 for British War Relief. . . . Most loyal film fan in Toronto is an elderly and asthmatic millionaire. Hot weather means tough times to him. He tried an ice-cooled movie house. Now, when it's torrid, he brings his lunch and parks in one show or the other from morn to night.

Flees Fowl World Does Daley's Polly

Make way for a mourner, brother. Get out your hanky. The sad news is here. It's late but it's here. Tom Daley's Imperial Polly, a veteran of show business, has passed on to parrot paradise.

They say it came in with the first furniture. No one knew its age. Every night Tom went over to its cage to say good-night and spend a few minutes chatting. They were probably disputing which had been longer in the business.

For over twenty years Polly cracked sunflower seeds on the mezzanine and squawked at kids who tried to steal them. Why, in a few years the bloated birdocrat would have been eligible for the Canadian Picture Pioneers.

It seemed to be always shaking its head and pondering the people who directed sweet and stereotyped phrases at it. Perhaps it was meditating on what fools these mortals be. It studied them with one blase eye. A long time ago a no-good guy jabbed a pencil into the other. On one occasion Tom, who likes parrots and has one at home, put the bounce on a heel who pushed a lighted cigarette into the cage.

It was found dead one morning. Likely bored to death from hearing "Pollywan'acracker?" flung at it thousands of times per week. Who wouldn't be?

Pascal Will Move To Montreal

Montreal will become the production centre for Gabriel Pascal's filmization of G. B. Shaw's plays. The producer and his staff of technicians surveyed two other cities, Toronto and Ottawa, before making a decision.

Pascal produced "Pygmalion" and the current "Major Barbara."

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I know this column is no great creation.
I know it is no cause for jubilation.
I know it will not stir the entire nation.
'Tis doubtful if 'twill even bring elation.
It isn't apt to start a conflagration,
Nor should it be the cause of consternation.
For if you're seeking startling information,
I'm sorry, but you'll find no revelation.
This isn't meant to be a big sensation.
I only mean to bring you recreation.

* * * * *

Expansion program? You'd think after Poppa Dionne and his Quintuplets, a guy wouldn't go around bragging about one teeny-weeny baby, would you? But that's just what Ben (Broadway) Ulster has been doing the past couple of months. Still, it's not bad for a start. And even at that, he's one up on a lot of guys I know.

* * * * *

Screeno: Those big-shots who have special screenings for themselves shouldn't feel so exclusive any more. I visited a factory that manufactures wire mesh, and in the summer they have special screenings for all kinds of pests and insects.

Miami blues or the evils of war: I've heard a lot of sympathy expressed for those exhibitors, who, this year, couldn't follow that time-honored custom of wintering in Miami. But nary a tear has been shed for the lads who had grown accustomed to being left in charge of the whole works each winter, while the boss sweated it out in the south. Let us offer a sigh of condolence for the ones who were suddenly confronted with the reality of having the boss home all winter. With old eagle-eye on the job, so many plans went to waste. No increased free list, no early closings, no dates with the cashier, or flirting with the customers, and, worse luck, no extra shekels from those late-comers after the box-office closes. My, oh my! What a severe winter.

* * * * *

Come into the parlor said the: Seeing as how Regal Films has been completely renovated inside (and pretty, too) surely they'll remove that "blackout" from the front door and windows, so's we can all peek in when passing. Or don't they want us to see what happens to those hapless exhibitors who recklessly enter?

* * * * *

Do you get the point? You've no doubt heard of the proverbial "tacks" men oft-times have been requested to sit on with quite painful consequences. But it's the new theatre tax that's really making the exhibitors holler "ouch!"

* * * * *

Don't breed dis to a soul: I was just thinking (honest!) that if making picture was like race-horse breeding, what a swell filly would result from crossing Metro with United Artists to produce "Gone With The Hurricane."

* * * * *

Man, overboard: Did you ever see a dream walking? Well, I did. And Elliott Steinheart was beside her too. Lucky stiff. You've often heard of a girl with a gleam in her eye, but this one had a gleam on her hand too. Elliot put it there. And you should see the size of that rock.

* * * * *

Out of the mouths of babes: And talking of babes, reminds me of that certain exhibitor who accosted a pretty young thing in the lobby one day with "Hi'ya, Babe?" And you should have heard what came out of the mouth of that babe. 'Twas utterly too awful to utter.

Another Sparkling Installation . . .

The new Centre Theatre, Pembroke, opened on May 1st. The owner, Mr. Sam Ulster, rightly chose for equipment suited to his needs Brenkert Senarc Lamps, Knitron Rectifiers, Ace Mechanisms and a Datone Screen. The results brought delighted comment.

Of course Coleman De Luxe Bases, Curtain Operators and other Coleman units of refinement lent aid in the smoothness of the performance.



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Yank Eagles In Newsreel Shots

Adventurous flying men from south of the border are among the ranks of the R.C.A.F. in the fight for democracy, and are proving their mettle. One of the most colorful "veterans" of the Spanish war was recently the pilot for a newsreel cameraman at Trenton, Ont., shooting the story of the Empire Air Training Plan.

The famous "Whitey" Dahl is now a pilot instructor and it was he who flew Roy Tash, Associated Screen News camera reporter aloft for aerial sequences in a newsreel story soon to be released in Canadian theatres. It will be recalled that Dahl fought with the Loyalists during the Spanish war, was taken prisoner and sentenced to be shot as a spy.

His beautiful actress wife intervened by sending her photograph to General Franco. Charmed by this photograph the Spanish leader set Dahl free. He returned to the United States and early in the war offered his services to the R.C.A.F.

Hey, Hollywood, Look Here!

How to win friends and influence exhibitors.

Leslie Plottel, RKO exchange manager in St. John and one of the famed film freres of that name, was out hustling the product. In New Glasgow he called on N. W. Mason, who was in no mood to talk pictures.

Mr. Mason once toured with Denman Thompson in "The Old Homestead." Almost annually he stages the sentimental old vehicle and it's a local tradition. He was in a jam. Curtain time was drawing nigh and one of the actors hadn't turned up.

But Leslie did. No Muni but game just the same, he donned the duds and trod the boards.

P.S. He got the contract.

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Meek—But Not Mild

Donald Meek, to movie patrons everywhere, is the beloved little man. Everybody knows one of the rabbit-mannered, fussy fellows. The cartoonists have made the type famous as the over-burdened John Public. They always get kicked around and they always end on top.

The character was crying to be brought to life. Nobody filled the need exactly until the namby-pamby, nervous Meek turned up and took over. Since then he has moused through more than 100 pictures—and stolen a good percentage of them from the stars. You hear an undertone of glad cries when he comes on. The audience settles back satisfied.

But the Meek of the shadows is not the Meek of the substance. The one of the films is a sissy compared with the one of the flesh. The latter fought in the first great war with the Ladies from Hell. He likes prizefights. The red-blooded poetry of Kipling is his favorite reading matter.

Not that the popular picture of him is far and away wrong. His preferred pet is a canary. He also enjoys gardening.

Canada occupies a vivid place in his memories. He came here with an acrobatic troupe from his native Scotland. They were headed for an American tour. In Hamilton, Ontario, he fell at work and

suffered four compound fractures. It put him in a hospital for 12 weeks.

He gave up trying to fly through the air with the greatest of ease. In the hospital he had plenty of time to think, figured out his classic characterization and made up his mind on acting. It was healthier. No sooner did he get out, then, with that surprising and heroic reasoning of the little man when there's a big job to be done, he enlisted with the Hamilton Highlanders.

After the big tiff he went to the States, married and settled in Boston. He joined a stock company there and shared a dressing-room with a beginner named Henry Hull. They finally got together again in "Jesse James."

Later he barnstormed through South Africa, India and Australia with a road show. In 1923 he broke in on Broadway in "Going Up." Then, in 1928, Hollywood hauled him in to work in "Hole in the Wall."

Donald Meek has been gadding about the globe for quite a spell. He was born in Glasgow in 1880 and made his debut eight years later in that city's Theatre Royal.

Here's hoping he'll keep audience and management happy for more pictures than we can ever count.

Television Knocking on the Door Gets Top-Spot Tryout in N.Y.

Long talked about in the industry, Television is about to be offered to the public. Arthur Mayer of the Rialto, New York, has announced that he had leased equipment from an English firm for an 18-week experimental run. Admission prices will be increased to meet the added expense. The Rialto set will cost about \$7500 and be in operation in several weeks. NBC is now sending out three shows a week, the total time of them being nine hours.

Recently RCA gave a Television presentation of a boxing bout and the 1200 spectators agreed that it was good entertainment and tech-

nically fine. Many movie men were present and added to the praise. When legal and technical problems are cleared up it is expected that the new type of offering will have a sharp impetus.

A wag suggested that Television leads to all kinds of interesting possibilities. Imagine Darryl Zanuck bidding against Mike Jacobs for the services of Joe Louis, Will Hays worrying about below-the-belt blows and Jack Warner wondering whether to affiliate with the National Boxing Association or the New York Commission.

Something new and different to worry exhibitors.

Real Duo Bill President and Choir

When it's speech time for President Roosevelt it's Sunday at the theatre. That is, like Canadian theatres, where, except in Quebec, the sabbath knows no movie business.

But Louise Crane, who is producer of the opera, "Four Saints in Three Acts," found the answer. She rigged up a public address system in Town Hall, N.Y., where the opera is in action.

Roosevelt shared the show with the singers—and stole it.

Crabbe & Co. Share Take With Fund

Buster Crabbe, if he isn't careful, will find himself back on the screen—and in a bigger way.

The Flash Gordon of pictures is in Canada wooing his first love, swimming. He gets top billing with a troupe known as the Water Follies.

While here he's been going overboard for the war effort, heeding requests for help. The other morning he and the troupe staged a special matinee for kids. Buster gave them tips on swimming.

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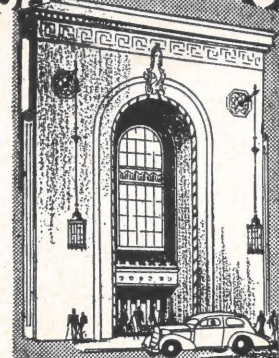
There's a report that one of the studios with a theatre chain will install circulating libraries in the foyer. The idea probably arose from the fact that sales of standard and classic fiction have hopped up after movie translation.

What with candy concessions, dinnerware and screenos, who knows what kind of a business the exhibitor will wake up to find himself in about a generation from now? Look what happened to the modest druggist of a couple of decades ago.

The book idea isn't bad. Even the small man might cut in on the literary resurgence to help traffic. Ticket-bearers could be handed a giveaway copy of a classic. Many publishing houses have large stocks of the old reliables, in many cases paper-covered.

A sizeable batch might be snatched for a price the house can stand.

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